

## CHAPTER 9

# CONCLUSION

For two consecutive years, the number of cases, which transcend from questions to serious misconduct, has decreased by over 30%. The number of cases handled in 2001 is comparable to five years ago. In 1997, 446 cases were received. In 1999, the number of cases peaked at 819. While the number of complaints is not the best indicator of the quality of police services, it is a measure that can be used for comparison from year to year. A sudden decrease or increase in complaints can be a greater indicator of a problem than the total number of complaints filed each year.

One of the most frequently posed questions is, "Why did the number of citizen complaints decrease/increase?" The IPA contends that a very low number of complaints is not necessarily an indication of less dissatisfaction nor greater satisfaction with police services, but rather may be a lack of confidence in or awareness of the process. Likewise, a

sudden rise in complaints is only indicative of a problem if they are of a similar nature. Assessing with any certainty, why the number of complaints fluctuates, would require resources beyond those available to this office. Therefore, only general assumptions and observations can be offered.

What can be expressed with a high degree of certainty is that the citizens of San José who desire to file a complaint can do so free of obstacles, intimidation, or retaliation. The process for filing a complaint is user friendly, easily accessible, and the allegations unfiltered. Every case, regardless of the nature, is documented and used to identify trends and patterns that show policy failures, problem officers, or a need to change police procedures and practices. The outcome of an individual investigation does not hinder or advance the effectiveness of the oversight process because of the cumulative effect.

While state law mandates that the investigation and any discipline imposed be kept confidential, the existence and the work of the IPA serves to assure the public that their complaints will be handled fairly, objectively, and the finding supported by the evidence. In the last eight years, the greatest testament to the work of the IPA is the number of significant changes and improvements that have taken place at the San José Police Department.